

Remarks of Jim Ewing
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Stratford Public Schools

Before the Program Review and Investigations Committee
November 14, 2011

Good afternoon Senator Fonfara and Representative Rowe, and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee.

My name is Jim Ewing, and I'm a retired teacher who taught history and social studies in the Stratford public schools for 27 years. I am also a former member of the Connecticut Advisory Council for Teacher Professional Standards (CACTPS), an advisory board to the State Department of Education. I am here today to comment on the issue of forming an independent standards board in Connecticut. I testified on this same issue before the Education Committee the last time it was raised, back in the 1980s, and find it ironic that even though the feasibility committee report was very favorable at the time, the idea of instituting an independent standards board never got off the ground, so here we are again.

Though CACTPS is meant to function as an advisory board, I know from experience that it does not exert any influence over the State Department of Education in regards to setting standards, granting certifications, crafting regulations, or handling educator discipline.

I had the opportunity to assist in crafting the Connecticut Code of Ethics for teachers in the late 1980s. Several other educators and I were instrumental writing this important document, as were members of the business community, several administrators, and at least one parent. We worked together then to create a document that has held up, and has, in fact, been the standard to which teachers have been held since. Since teachers comprised the majority of the group who created this code of ethics, I see no reason why a similar group of people could not be brought together, this time to form a board to regulate the profession, using these same ethical standards. Teachers

would not be the only persons on this board; though they would be the majority, the opportunity for business people, parents, and superintendents to serve on the board would also exist.

Teaching is the only profession in this state that does not have a standards board, made up of members from their own ranks, overseeing their profession. Educators can be entrusted to teach our children, so why shouldn't they be trusted to know what good teaching—and ultimately best practices for educators—should look like?

I urge the Program Review and Investigations Committee to consider putting an autonomous, independent standards board in place in Connecticut, for the benefit of our teachers, our students, and our profession.